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The CIA looks good in Pentagon papers

By PAUL W. BLACKSTOCK

Ever since the Bay of Pigs fiasco in April, 1961, the Central Intelligence Agency has had a bad press in this country and abroad. The 1957 "revelations" that the agency had secretly financed the National Student Association, plus a number of university-affiliated research institutes and anti-Communist cultural fronts, came as a shock to both students and the public.

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As the United States became bogged down in the Vietnam quagmire and the student anti-war protest gathered momentum, the CIA became a favorite target of abuse. Agency recruiters were driven from college campuses. CIA-financed study centers were "trashed" at a cost of many thousands of dollars. New Left orators, armed with a sense of outrage and an encyclopedic ignorance of the intelligence community and its functions, instinctively assumed that the CIA was a major factor in the escalation of the war in Vietnam.

But the Pentagon study of the war, recently published by the New York Times proves conclusively that the Don Quixotes of the New Left have been charging at the wrong windmill. For many years and at critical stages of the escalation, the CIA and other members of the intelligence community, especially the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research repeatedly warned against the hazards involved, including flat predictions that the strategic bombing of North Vietnam would fail to accomplish its objectives.

Deceived Themselves

How these estimates and warnings were ignored by top policy-makers as they carried out their deliberate and "immaculate deception" of the American public is one of the more fascinating aspects of the Pentagon papers. But in deceiving the public, the decision-makers also deceived themselves, and eventually came to believe optimistic "military progress" reports, released to the public as based on the "latest intelligence," when in fact at the highest level, the estimates were widely different. Reports from the field, including typical "show-

Harold Wilson, when appointed shadow Foreign Secretary, rushed to Washington to assure President Kennedy that Labor would stand four-square behind the U.S. in the Far East. There is no evidence that he subjected American intentions to any very close scrutiny. He recognized a fellow Boy Scout when he saw one, and did not scruple to borrow the Kennedy overblown rhetoric in explaining to doubting colleagues the nature of Britain's East of Suez peace-keeping mission.

job" briefings in Saigon, deceived only those officials, either civilian or military, who wanted to believe them."

What is the "intelligence community"? How is it organized and what role should it play in decision-making at the national level in such foreign entanglements as the war in Vietnam? The answers to these questions have been cloaked in secrecy when they should be a matter of public knowledge.

To begin with the basic institutions, the U.S. intelligence community is made up of the separate agencies of such key government departments as State and Defense, the National Security Agency, and the CIA, which has the overall responsibility for "coordinating, evaluating, and disseminating intelligence affecting the national security."

"First Line Of Defense"

It has often been said that "intelligence is the first line of national defense." Most citizens are vaguely aware that foreign policy and military decisions are made by the President with the advice of his secretaries of State and Defense, based, in theory at least, on the best information available to experts throughout the government. The collection, evaluation and dissemination of such information is one of the primary functions of intelligence.

But in foreign and military affairs, strategic decisions should also take into account careful estimates of the capabilities and probable courses of action of friends, allies, neutrals and "enemies." The production of such national estimates is a second major function of the entire intelligence community, although the board of estimates in the CIA coordinates the individual agency contributions and disseminates the final results.

As a rule, the various intelligence agencies are staffed on the working level by thousands of anonymous civil servants who are seldom equaled elsewhere in either government or private enterprise.

Many of the men on the CIA's Board of National Estimates and its staff have more than two decades of intelligence experience. Better than 90 per cent of the officials on this top echelon have advanced academic degrees in history, political science, or economics directly pertinent to their work. About 75 per cent have enhanced their area and subject knowledge by living overseas. The estimators in State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research are equally competent and well-qualified.

Advice To President

On the national level daily and weekly reports are promptly distributed to the President and his chief advisers, and special estimates or briefings are made as required in response to developing crises. In short, the intelligence community provides the decision-maker with carefully evaluated information and estimates which he can either use for guidance or disregard.

History is full of illustrations how national leaders have ignored the estimates of the intelligence agencies with disastrous results. Napoleon's intelligence aide, the Marquis de Caulaincourt, explained why, for obvious strategic reasons, the planned invasion of Russia would fail. His advice was ignored.

A century later, Adolph Hitler's ambassador in Russia, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, used the same reasoning in his estimate of why Hitler's plan would fail. His warning was also ignored and Hitler launched his invasion, which was widely heralded as the final showdown in his lifelong crusade against world communism. The campaign ultimately floundered in a sea of blood—20 million Russian casualties alone, not to mention German losses which also ran into the millions.

Nothing quite as dramatic has happened since.

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